

Message Text

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APPROVED BY EUR - MR. LAINGEN

EUR/IB AWLUKENS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MADRID

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 108090

E.O.: 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP, US, NATO

SUBJ.: MEETING WITH NICOLAS FRANCO

1. NICOLAS FRANCO CALLED MAY 6 ON DEP. ASST. SECY LAINGEN AS PART OF FULL SCHEDULE OF CALLS IN WASHINGTON. HE NOTED THAT LAINGEN WAS ONLY MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH HE WOULD SEE THIS TRIP BUT THAT HE HOPED TO SEE OTHERS, INCLUDING VICE PRESIDENT, ON RETURN TRIP IN JUNE. WASHINGTON VISIT THIS TIME WAS THUS OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM TO MEET WITH LEADING MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, E.G. SENATORS HUMPHREY, PERCY, MCGOVERN, JACKSON, AND REPRESENTATIVES RHODES, MORGAN, DERWINSKI, ETC.

2. LAINGEN SAID WE WELCOMED CHANCE TO LEARN FIRST-HAND HOW YOUNGER SPANISH LEADERS APPROACH PRESENT SITUATION. FRANCO THEN LAUNCHED INTO ANIMATED DISCUSSION OF SPANISH DOMESTIC SCENE IN LIGHT OF IMPEDING TRANSITION, WHICH HE BELIEVED WAS NOT FAR OFF. HE WAS ENCOURAGING ABOUT PROSPECTIVE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE OF JUAN CARLOS AS KING BUT THOUGHT SUCCESSION COULD BE STRENGTHENED IF STEPS TO
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LIBERALIZE REGIME WERE TAKEN NOW, RATHER THAN AFTER TRANSITION. RE PORTUGAL, HE SAID HE HAD VISITED LISBON SEVERAL TIMES SINCE APRIL 25 COUP (IN HIS CAPACITY AS HEAD OF SPANISH-PORTUGUESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE) AND HAD

REPORTED TO GENERAL FRANCO HIS VIEW THAT PORTUGAL WAS IN

VERY BAD SHAPE. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT FEEL THAT PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENTS FORESHADOWED POST-FRANCO EVENTS IN SPAIN, THOUGH SOME SPANIARDS VIEWED PORTUGUESE MODEL AS IDEAL WHILE OTHERS USED PORTUGAL AS WORST CASE EXAMPLE.

3. WITH RESPECT TO US-SPANISH TIES AND SPANISH-NATO RELATIONS, FRANCO SAID MOST POLITICALLY-AWARE SPANIARDS CONTINUED TO SEE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSE RELATIONS WITH US, EVEN THOUGH THOSE RELATIONS MIGHT NOT TAKE SAME FORM AS IN EARLIER PERIOD. IF NATO MEMBERSHIP WERE OFFERED TO SPAIN AT PRESENT, HE - AND MANY OTHERS - WOULD OPPOSE IT. IN RESPONSE TO LAINGEN'S QUESTION, HE SAID HE OPPOSED NATO MEMBERSHIP FOR PRESENT REGIME BECAUSE OF CONCERN THAT POPULAR REACTION IN POST-FRANCO ERA MIGHT FOCUS ON SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT AND FORCE JUAN CARLOS TO QUOTE THROW SOME MEAT TO THE LIONS UNQUOTE. SPANISH ENTRANCE INTO NATO AFTER FRANCO WOULD, TO HIM, BE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MATTER.

4. FRANCO SAID HE WOULD CONVEY HIS REACTIONS TO WASHINGTON VISIT TO AMBASSADOR STABLER AND WOULD KEEP EMBASSY INFORMED OF PLANS FOR HIS NEXT VISIT, PROBABLY IN EARLY JUNE. KISSINGER

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